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DC COUNTDOWN

COUNTDOWN: T MINUS FIVE WEEKS

In just over a month, DC offers their next high-profile project that continues the momentum of ***Identity Crisis***—and that's only the beginning!

DC Countdown, an all-star project that involves three of DC's most talented writers and more than a half-dozen of their best artists, promises to be another major event in the DC Universe. Judging from the cover, it's also going to add one more victim to the body count... or can cover images be misleading?

Dan DiDio, DC's Vice President—Editorial and the editor of ***DC Countdown***, offered some insight into this landmark book and the projects that follow. "If you look at ***Identity Crisis*** as one of our starting points, you can see that it helped reset the tonality of the DC Universe and gave it an attitude and a personality," DiDio said. "What we're doing with ***Countdown*** is setting the direction, further defining the tone, and giving a backdrop against which all of the characters will exist and survive, and really give a feel that this is a world picture, and this is a comprehensive universe. This is a place where everybody exists together as one."

When ***Identity Crisis*** was still in development, did DiDio foresee its ramifications rippling through the DCU for several months afterwards? "When we got ***Identity Crisis*** in from *Brad [Meltzer*, writer of the hit series], I knew what we wanted to do with the DCU and where we wanted to go. I knew what the tone I wanted to see come into the DCU was—I wanted to put a level of danger and of consequence to the DCU and the characters. We had been addressing that piece by piece, but realistically speaking, you can only change tonality on the individual books incrementally without turning off too many people, or confusing people along the way.

"So, when we got to ***Identity Crisis*** and I saw that the story basically hit the nail on the head in terms of the number of characters that we wanted to address as well as changed the whole feel and perception of how people saw the DCU characters—I felt that was a great starting point from which we could move out from...

"I've always looked at the DCU as very proactive universe. Our heroes get powers by accident or circumstance; they inherently know how to put on a costume. They inherently know how to do good. They go out on patrol, they're proactive, and they're greeted in the world as heroes. They walk into a bar, and the folks in there would pat 'em on the back and buy them a drink.

"What I was looking for was to give them a *reason*. The heroes are putting on a costume for a *reason*. They're motivated to do so, because something inside them tells them that they don't exist as they are if they *don't* put that costume on. If they do that, they know that they are sacrificing other aspects of their life—and more importantly, they're out to make the world a better place, and they know that not everyone will agree with their views and motives to achieve that goal. There are a lot of choices being made – a lot of difficult choices being made... If our people are going out, seeking trouble, and trying to stop it, then ultimately, they are doing it at a cost to their own lives, and I want to show what that cost *is*. I want to give them a sense of vulnerability. Even though they may seem invulnerable, they can be hurt—as ***Identity Crisis*** showed."

As DiDio sees it, the roots of this shift in tone can be found in a real-world event that made all of us view our own lives differently. "A lot of this actually came following September 11th. After everything that occurred in New York City, I was coming to work at DC, and going through the Port Authority. At that time, you would walk into the Port Authority, and you would have National Guardsmen standing there with machine guns. He's standing there holding his machine gun, and is supposed to be making me feel better and more protected, but somehow, that gave me a greater sense of dread—it put me more on edge.

"Honestly, when I looked at that, I felt that was an attitude that we had to bring to our heroes. There should be two reactions when a superhero walks into a room. The first reaction is, 'They're here for something,' and the second reaction is, 'I hope they're not here for *me*.' No one should be taking a step forward to pat them on the back—they should be taking a step backward, thinking, 'Something bad is about to happen here.'

"So what happens is that when you look at it that way, from the 'outsider' approach, they band together as a group because they share a common goal—to make the world a better place. When you peel that away, though, what's everybody's definition of 'a better place?' What are they trying to achieve? Now what we've done is brought in a level of conflict in how our heroes go out to do their business. That aspect makes up a lot of what we're going to be exploring over the next year—what might be good for one might not be good for another...or for a third.

"We've broken up the trinity—Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman are no longer standing shoulder to shoulder. And now they're the focal points of everything that's about to happen, because they *should* be."

As DiDio sees it, the three superheroic icons of the DC Universe each fulfill a different role. "If you want to break it down into the simplest terms: Batman is the policeman—he goes out on patrol and tries to prevent crime. If a crime happens, he finds the person, apprehends them, and brings them in. Superman is the fireman—he goes out and is waiting for a problem. When something does happen, he's the first responder. He's there to help; he's there to save people. He's not there to affect change or pass judgment; he's there to help whoever is in trouble... Wonder Woman is the activist of the DC Universe. She has a social purpose, a social cause, a direction, and an opinion. She is going out to affect change to make a better world through her social beliefs.

"Each one of these three—if you look at them individually, they're all working to make the world better, but they're approaching it in different ways. It's only natural that those approaches might bring them into conflict in how they help people and work to make the world better."

To convey that new tonality, DiDio enlisted three of DC's best writers—*Geoff Johns*, *Judd Winick*, and *Greg Rucka*. What do they bring to the project? "I reached out to Greg, Judd, and Geoff over a year ago, and we started to lie some of the groundwork. *Jeph Loeb* was involved with it too, but he was basically the one who we were bouncing ideas off of, rather than being physically in the room with the rest.

"The first thing that's wonderful about these guys is that they're friends, and they're talking amongst each other normally, so there's a natural camaraderie among the three. The second thing is that, when the three walk in a room, all egos are gone, and any attitude is checked at the door. They only want to do one thing—tell a great story.

"Looking at the guys individually, they give me three interesting directions on how we can approach characters and storytelling. Judd has a level of irreverence, but he brings a social conscience to it. Greg has depth and a way to bring in the weight of the world, and get you really emotionally involved in the core characters themselves. Geoff has a sense of superheroes and adventure, and the epic nature of story-telling, too. Put the three together, and every one of them has all of those aspects, some of them are just a little stronger in the others. When they're together as a whole, they have a real sense of how to tell the broadest, most accessible stories that we, as a company, can put out for the mass audience.

"What's even more interesting is that when you put the three of them together in a room, they're driving about 25% of my lineup, based on sheer volume of work. As a group, they can affect story and drive over all story for the entire universe, just thanks to the books they're working on. But I don't have to work with just those three and their books—they work so well with others that other people are joining in and wanting to be a part of it. It's something that's easy to build when you have a strong foundation like these guys.

"The best thing about being the editor of ***Countdown*** for me is finding a way to use each one of them to their strength and build a straight through storyline with chapters moving in and out. Each one comes in with their own style and tone, and I get to make sure all the pieces have a flow to them. That's fun!"

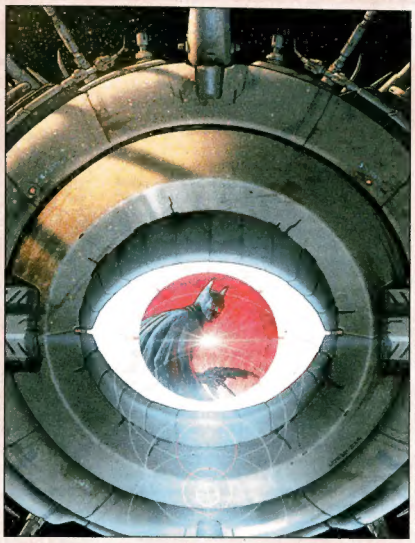
DC is making ***Countdown*** virtually irresistible by making the book extremely affordable. This eighty-page oneshot will carry a $1 price-etag—that's almost four times as much story for less than half the price of the cheapest monthly DC comic. Of course, that would be a bad move if ***Countdown*** were totally self-contained—but this book also paves the way for several important projects coming up in the next few months. "***Countdown*** serves two purposes – for one, it's an entertaining, exciting story... I wanted to make sure that ***Countdown*** was something that had a beginning, middle and end, and was a strong story in its own right. It also has to serve as a springboard for the four miniseries... Running them down:

"***The OMAC Project***, written by *Greg Rucka* with art by *Jesus Saiz*. Probably more so than anything else, this spins directly out of the story of ***Countdown***. It also picks up on storylines that are left over from ***Identity Crisis***, and starts to answer the question of does Batman know what the Justice League did to him—and more importantly, what's he going to do about it?

"Next ***is Day of Vengeance***, which deals with things spinning out of ***Identity Crisis*** and ***Green Lantern: Rebirth***. We have the Spectre spirit loose and attacking the magical aspects of the DC Universe. It's written by *Bill Willingham* and drawn by *Justiniano*.

"Number three, which follows in May, is ***Villains United***, which also spins out of ***Identity Crisis***. We set up the sense of camaraderie among the villains, now we're moving it up to the next level. The villains are organizing. Who's organizing them, and who doesn't want to be a part of this group and why are two of the major questions being asked in that miniseries. That's written by *Gail Simone* and penciled by *Dale Eaglesham*.

"The final miniseries will be ***The Rann/Thanagar War***. This is being established a bit in ***Adam Strange***, and it will be coming out and crossing over with ***Green Lantern***, and work to reestablish the cosmic scope of the DC Universe, and build on it. That one's written by *Dave Gibbons*, and drawn by *Ivan Reis*.



"We're addressing different issues in each of the stories. ***The Rann/Thanagar*** War rebuilds the cosmic aspect of the DC Universe, as well as the science fiction aspect of the DC Universe. ***Day of Vengeance*** lays out what we believe to be the magical world of the DCU, something that was very strong for a long time, and something that we want to rebuild. There will be a lot of old characters appearing in that miniseries—some that haven't been seen in twenty or thirty years.

"***The OMAC Project*** really addresses what it takes to be a superhero and the social aspects of the DCU and how the world reacts to the heroes. And then, in ***Villains United***, I'm going to steal a phrase from *Judd Winick* – 'It's just a big honkin' superhero versus supervillain story.' It's about action, adventure, and everything that goes into a superhero story. We want to bring that level of action and excitement back into the DC Universe across the entire line. This is why it was important to get a group of writers who like to work together, as well as a group of editors who were out there working with everybody, working to create something that would be a solid backdrop against which the DC Universe will be set."

Don't think of these as isolated, self-contained miniseries that have no ramifications beyond their own pages. "There's been a story that's been unfolding in the DC Universe since the death of Donna Troy... Believe it or not, things that started in that story—back with Donna Troy's death will finally bear fruit down the line," DiDio said. "We've been dropping secrets and hints and bits and pieces across the DCU since she died. Everything is starting to come together and make sense. Everything is starting to have a cohesive feel and starting to appear like it's happening in the same place at the same time—and this is something that I think people can invest in and enjoy reading, and enjoy experiencing part of our world."

And of course, the name ***Countdown*** implies that the project is counting down to something... but what? "The end of my contract maybe if it doesn't all work," DiDio said with a laugh. "Seriously, we are counting down to something, but I want to concentrate on the *start* of the countdown, rather than the end of it."

As to whose body Batman is holding on the cover of ***Countdown***—well, DiDio won't even give a hint. "Although, if you talk to *Jim Lee*, he'll tell you it's one person, and if you talk to *Alex Ross*, he'll tell you it's someone else. Once I saw the cover, I had to hustle to make sure everyone who appeared there was in the book, too!"

DC Countdown #1, written by *Geoff Johns*, *Greg Rucka & Judd Winick*, with art by *Rags Morales*, *Ed Benes*, *Phil Jimenez*, *Ivan Reis*, *& Jesus Saiz*, and a cover by *Jim Lee & Alex Ross*, is scheduled for March 30th release. ***Day of Vengeance #1*** follows one week later, while ***The OMAC Project #1*** is scheduled for April 27th release. May brings ***Villains United*** and ***The Rann/Thanagar War***. And what comes after that? No word yet... but remember, as DiDio indicated, ***DC Countdown*** does begin a countdown to something *big*...

BY MATT BRADY & CLIFF BIGGERS

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by ***Comic Shop News*** in cooperation with *Matt Brady* and *newsarama.com*

Wonder What Morales Is Up To Next?

What do you do after you've illustrated the comic book event of 2004? For ***Identity Crisis*** penciller *Rags Morales*, the decision was a simple one: he's taking on one of DC's most iconic characters, Wonder Woman—and he's going to be joined by his ***Identity Crisis*** inker *Michael Bair* when they begin illustrated *Greg Rucka's* ***Wonder Woman*** beginning with #215.

There's no doubt that Morales could have had pretty much any book he wanted at DC—so what led him to the amazing Amazon? "*Geoff Johns* and I have had some discussions about some future projects that we're pretty hot about, so the important thing of what I was going to do after ***Identity Crisis*** was that it would to have to leave room for getting to those projects," Morales told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Matt Brady*. "So I went to *Dan DiDio* in San Diego, and we discussed the possibilities, and he literally said, 'Whatever you want to do.' He told me that DC was going to be focusing on ***Wonder Woman*** in 2005, and that it would be great if I could do some continuity, that is, issues of a regular comic, rather than another big project."

Morales was eager to take on an ongoing series rather than going straight to another high-profile special project. "Continuity really is the thing you should be doing once you get out of a big project like ***Identity Crisis***. You don't want to jump into another big project or miniseries. You want to keep producing on a regular schedule. So, doing something in continuity was my first choice, and with ***Wonder Woman***—well, I love *Greg Rucka's* writing. I started looking at his run, and really started enjoying the things he was doing, as well as the interplay between the gods that he was working with and building on.

"I thought it was pretty cool stuff, and the more I thought about it, the more it started making sense to work with him. Greg's a character-driven writer, so my aptitude for being able to convey subtleties within a character would be a plus. Also, I had always been very comfortable with fantasy-oriented stuff, so I liked the whole idea of gods and magic and great big displays of special effects. It's a way of getting to work on everything that I think I'm pretty good at, and still stay within the larger framework of an iconic character. The fact that she was going to have some attention drawn to her sealed the deal for me.

"After that, it was just a matter of how long, since I'm looking to start leading towards some other projects. But I'm thoroughly enjoying it so far. I've always had respect for her as a character, but for whatever reason, she's had a hard time grabbing a

larger audience of say, Superman or Batman in the past ten years. I'm not sure why that is, but I wanted to see if I could do something to help, if possible. It's a bit of a challenge, but I'm looking forward to it."

Ironically, Wonder Woman was one character that Morales barely got to illustrate in ***Identity Crisis***. "It was maybe three head shots and a couple of medium shots of her in a group," he said.

A few critics had described some aspects of ***Identity Crisis*** as misogynistic. Did that criticism influence Morales' decision to take on a book featuring an iconic female rather than a male superhero? "Some, but not at all because I agreed with it," Morales said. "I wanted to go straight to a character that couldn't in the least bit be considered misogynistic, so that that criticism didn't start to overpower the story again.

"That said, I don't think ***Identity Crisis*** was misogynistic, and I didn't buy the claims that it was. Misogyny is the hatred of women, and that hate is based on intent, on an attack, and that wasn't there from the creative side—there was no intent, no attack. Brad's not a misogynist. You can tell that in his other writing—he writes strong women in his stories, but in this case, he went a different route in terms of highlighting certain female characters. I don't think that was misogynistic at all, and I don't think that any story needs to address every political agenda of every single reader. ***Identity Crisis*** didn't have many black characters playing main roles, nor Hispanic characters, or even Superman. Where does it end? If every story has to fit into every readers' view of what is perfectly acceptable and correct, it's not a story—it's a checklist of approved ingredients.

"So, if anyone thinks the intent of ***Identity Crisis*** was to be misogynistic, that's flat-out wrong... I wanted to make sure that couldn't happen, so I went with ***Wonder Woman***. But again, that was only part of why I opted to draw Wonder Woman. I respect her as a character, and am really looking forward to the challenge."

How does Morales envision ***Wonder Woman***? "Geoff and I were discussing the differences between Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, and we basically resolved the fact that Superman is the alien with the sense of being a guest in someone's house, no matter what he does. Batman is the complete opposite in that he has always been here, and understands the human level in a way that Superman can't. With Wonder Woman, you've got a hybrid of the two, and speaks of a more ideal view of what men and women could be. She comes from the point of view of tradition – more of a philosophical antiquities point of view.

"It's a hard line that she draws. She's very much a conservative with a liberal heart – a blend between Superman and Batman. That's what I'm hoping to bring out with her, to show her in a very dignified manner.

"I know there's the temptation when you draw female characters to draw more attention to their feminine qualities as opposed to her heroic or personal qualities, so I'm going to do this with the intention of showing her in a reserved light, but not at all losing her sense of attractiveness in the least."

What about the fantasy elements that Morales mentioned earlier—will Rucka be playing that up in future storylines? "Oh yeah. I'm about 75% done with my first issue, and so far, Greg has had seven scenes addressing the gods situation, the supporting cast, Wonder Woman herself, and a kickass fight scene. Yeah, he's giving me plenty to work with. I've done more research than I've done actual drawing at this point with this book. I have to make sure I know how *Drew Johnson* drew some of the locations to make sure I'm consistent with the earlier issues—and then on top of that, I've been digging up references on older characters and other things. It's been a slow boil for me to get going, but once I get through the first couple of issues, I'll be in good form, and able to rely on what I've done, rather than see how everyone else did it before me."

Since he has those projects with *Geoff Johns* in the planning stages as well, how long will he be able to commit to ***Wonder Woman***? "The project with Geoff has actually been delayed due to the amount of storylines coming out over the next year in the DCU. We may be sitting on that for a little while, so I'm in flux on that. I also know that *Ethan Van Sciver* absolutely *adores* Wonder Woman, and would love to get a shot at drawing her sometime, so I wouldn't want to stand in the way of him doing that for too long. But, we've got at least six issues to see what's going on, so…we'll have to see."

Wonder Woman #215 is slated for mid-April release.

Some Frank Words About Batman

Last month, CSN told you about the upcoming *Frank Miller-Jim Lee* ***Batman All-Star*** book featuring the Bruce Wayne-Dick Grayson Batman & Robin team that fans have come to know over the years through a variety of media. Now we have a few words from *Frank Miller* himself regarding the project, how it came about, and where he hopes to go with it.

What led Miller to sign on as writer of the new series? "It's Batman & Robin, the Boy Wonder!" Miller replied. "Jim wanted to work with me. It looked like fun. Once Jim said he was ready to run with my notion of featuring a very young Dick Grayson as the story's hero, we were rolling."

Shortly after the second Dark Knight project came to an end, Miller had told CSN that he was talking to DC about possibly writing other books that would be set in the "Dark Knight Universe," as he described it. Will he utilize any of the ideas he had bounced around for that DKU spinoff in this new series? "Anything I come up with about *any* of these characters is DKU," Miller said. "DC winds up adopting just about all of it, anyway..

In his ***Dark Knight*** work, Miller has given readers a glimpse into the twilight years of Batman's career. In ***Batman: Year One***, he's shared the beginning of the Batman saga. So where does ***Batman All-Star*** fall in his Batman time-table? "Year Three. Bats is feeling his oats—very young, maybe acting a little crazy, but he knows exactly what he's doing. He's just a bit sloppier about doing it than he's going to eventually get."

DC has described this book as having a sort of timeless quality, rather than being overtly set in any single era. As far as Miller is concerned, though, is there one Bat-era that's a personal fave—and will he try to invoke the feel of that era in his stories? "Personal fave? The 40's. But who knows where we'll go?"

The last time Miller tackled Batman, his story was seasoned with a heaping helping of sardonic satire; will this series be more straight-ahead and serious in tone? "Wait and see, man!"

And of course, we'll *all* be waiting for that first issue to reach comic shops in July so that we can experience this super-team's take on Batman and Robin for ourselves!

Alias Affordability

Publishers try all sorts of approaches to ensure that fans notice their books on the stands. Some do variant covers; some do foil enhancements; some do bonus pages. But *Mike S. Miller* has a different plan to call attention to the initial offerings from Alias.

In his first month of publishing Miller's offering a selection of four full-color first issues for less than a buck a book. And these aren't half-length preview issues filled with sketches and promises—these are actual full-length comics!

Miler is confident that there are huge numbers of readers who'd enjoy the books that Alias has in the works—if they'd just give them a try. So his plan is to kick off his line this spring with an array of 75¢ first issues that'll introduce readers to the wide array of genre fiction that Alias will offer each month.

"Sure, as comic fans, we all love comics, it goes without saying," Miller wrote at the Alias website. "But there is a world of non-comic fans out there that would enjoy comics if they only knew they existed. And we don't just mean in a 'oh, there are comics, but they're just for kids' way. Although we do think that comics should reach as wide an audience as possible, comics are not 'just for kids'. But rather in a, 'I didn't know there were *that kind* of comics' way.

"Be it fantasy, all-ages, horror, sci-fi, action-adventure, western, etc.—and yes, even superheroes—we intend to cover every genre out there to reach as many readers as possible. How do we achieve this? By partnering with multiple studios and individual creators who have a heart for each of their own particular genres. Each studio or individual creator has dedicated their time and resources toward producing the best comics for their genre, and the end result is a publishing company with a diversity that will be unmatched in the comic world."

Miller's name should be familiar to comic readers—after all, he's involved in several high-profile launches from Image, including ***Lullaby: Wisdom Seeker, The Imaginaries,*** and ***Lions, Tigers, & Bears***.In April, Miller will focus his efforts on his new Alias publishing venture. The line kicks off with a quartet of premiere issues priced at six bits each. The bargain books include:

•***Deal With the Devil #1*** (by *Mike S. Miller & Sherwin Schwartzrock*) - ***Deal With The Devil*** is the tale of a man who once had it all; family, faith, health, the respect and adoration of his peers, and the reputation as the best homicide detective in FBI history. In his last case, his prey became his hunter, and his career was ended in shame and worthlessness. Four years later, his nemesis returns to ask for... his help. Find out why in this thrilling journey through the darkness in a world where things are never what they seem...

•***Killer Stunts Inc. #1*** (by Scott Kinney, Scott Cohn, & Mike Manley) - Billy Andrews, a Hollywood stuntman who's struggling in his relationship with a rising film starlet, Laura Leigh, and to keep his fledgling stunt company, Killer Stunts, Inc., afloat in the new age of CGI-dominated special effects is sucked into an assignment from a covert government agency – not knowing he's being used as a pawn in a vast conspiracy. In over his head, the daredevil-for-hire re-teams with his former mentor, John Lynch, an aging legend in the stunt community, and is forced to utilize all his "tricks of the trade" to not only stay alive, but to stop the bad guys from pulling off a major heist. This project has already been optioned for film and videogame development.

•***Lethal Enforcer #1*** (by *Romulo Soares, Wagner Baehr, Bart A.Thompson, Jack Jadson, Ruy Rosé, & Wellington Dias*) - Frank Aaron, a police officer in Blackstone City, carries a curse in the form of severe Lycanthropy — Frank is a werewolf. Sharing the secret of his plight with Dr. Carl Sanchez and his homicide partner Daniel Whitman, Frank hopes to control or end his curse in order to join "The Special Division" which deals in superhuman and paranormal cases to help those like himself.

•***Elsinore #1*** (by *Kenneth Lillie-Paetz & Brian Denham*) - Did the Apocalypse already happen without anyone noticing? Angels scour the sky and demons stalk the streets. Meanwhile, the patients of Elsinore Mental Hospital are under the control of a secret society. Locked up without treatment, the inmates are developing supernatural powers. Humankind's only hope for survival is descending further into madness... The end begins here.

In addition to these four 75¢ first issues, Alias will offer eight more titles in April, including:

•***Tenth Muse Volume II #1*** (by *Darren G. Davis, Alex Amezcua, Billy Crooks, & Todd Swain*) - The Muse is back and things have not gotten any easier on Mount Olympus. In fact, the future of the entire Greek Pantheon teeters on the brink of extinction. The gods look to Emma Sonnett, the Tenth Muse, to restore their glory and preserve the old ways. But before they can fix this divine rift, the Muse and Ares, the god of war, must find out the cause of this Olympian cancer.

•***Tenth Muse Volume One TP*** (by *Marv Wolfman, Ken Lashley, & Draxhall Jump Studios*) - Collects the first four issues of the original series.

•***Judo Girl #1 (by Terrence Gripe, Nadir Balan, & Nick Schley)*** - From the pages of ***The Tenth Muse***

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comes a new hero. Judo Girl is a woman on a mission: after having spent forty years in suspended animation. Now's she's looking for her missing brother. And Captain Steel hasn't exactly spent the last four decades collecting rust. Indeed, his awful plans are about to solidify on a worldwide scale. On the flip side is a retro story set during the era of go-go boots and slot cars revealing the secret origin of the original Steel Ray. Both the modern story and the retro story tie in together for one fantastic adventure!

•***Ted Noodleman, Bicycle Delivery Boy*** (by *Jim Keplinger & Ryan Ottley*) - The complete works of ***Ted Noodleman*** as originally published on MoviePoopShoot.com and in ***Digital Webbing Presents***, all completely re-mastered and in full color, supplement with new Noodleman stories, behind the scenes art and script battles, and more.

•***SoulCatcher*** (by *Jason Henderson, Lou Manna, Terry Pallot, Leslie Barkley, & Ed Dukeshire*) - From the creator of ***Sword of Dracula*** comes this graphic novel that tells the story of a young, smart and sexy widow who comes to New Orleans, the "the most haunted city in America," in search of the ghost of her dead husband. Instead she discovers she has the power to absorb the abilities of the recently dead-and uncovers a mystery the spirit world will kill to protect.

•***Pakkins' Land #1*** (by *Gary & Rhoda Shipman*) - The incredible all-ages fantasy series that was nominated for Eisner, Harvey and Russ Manning Awards is now available in full color. Join the adventure as a .series of strange events brings Paul to a fantastic world called "Pakkins' Land". There he meets a mysterious giant Eagle of light who gives him a feather as a token of friendship. At the touch of this feather Paul feels something magical, and as the Eagle mysteriously vanishes, Paul realizes that he is lost in this new world. Soon Paul is befriended by a pair of extraordinary talking animals, who set off together to find the long lost King Aryah, and try to return Paul to his own land.

•***David's Mighty Men*** (by *Javier Saltares*) - Join David and his mighty men in this whimsical but reverent retelling of some of the Bibles greatest heroes. This graphic novel contains two complete stories.

•***Legacy Pocket Manga*** (by *Sean Jordan, Carmen Treffiletti, & Edu Francisco*) - Collects ***Legacy #s 1-4***. Zelandria is a patchwork world of magical lands and technologically laden cities, where age-old myths collide with futuristic wonders, and mystical creatures dwell among ordinary men. A place where power is contingent on nobility and feudalistic hierarchies govern widespread provinces. It is here where the seeds of legend are sown and the paths of heroes are paved. It is here where a Legacy will be born.

That's four 75¢ comics, three $2.99 comics, two $4.99 oneshots, and three $9.99 trade paperback compilations in the first month—certainly not a modest beginning for a new publisher!

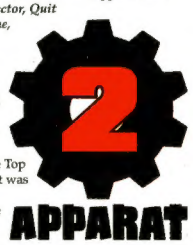
"The spring will bring new titles as well—some I can discuss, others I cannot," Miller told *Benjamin Ong Paen Kean* of ***Comic Shop Newsarama***. "Among those I can talk about are *T Campbell & Gisele Legace's* fan favorite web comic ***Penny and Aggie***, the return of Dorothy to Wonderland in ***OzF5***, a fantastic tale of dragons and magic in ***Armor Quest*** and more from your favorite studios like Blue Water, DBPro, Community Comics and more!

"Alias is approached almost daily by people and studios who want to publish with us... As difficult as it is to say 'no', we do have to maintain a level of quality that our fans will expect from our company. As to who we will partner with, Alias is in negotiations with several companies, studios and license holders for various properties and projects. I'd rather not disclose who and what until the ink is dry, but you will be the first to know!

"It's going to be a big year for Alias, and we hope to continue to grow as fast as the fans allow us to!"

Ins & Outs

In! More Apparat titles from *Warren Ellis*? While he hasn't released any details, Ellis *did* post a graphic at his warrenellis.com website that seemed to indicate that a second wave of Apparat books are in the works. Will these be second issues of the four Apparat titles that have already appeared from Avatar Press, or will they be the first issues of all-new Apparat concepts? Too early to tell—but it does appear that Ellis is prepared to revisit the Apparat concept at some point in the future. (And in case you're not familiar with Apparat, Ellis describes it as "a group of imaginary first issues of imaginary series from an imaginary line of comics on an imaginary fifth week." The first wave of Apparat titles included ***Simon Specter, Quit City, Frank Ironwine,*** and ***Angel Stomp Future***—four titles representing four different genres.) Of course, ***CSN*** will bring you more news as it becomes available.



In! ***Stripburger***, the Top Shelf anthology that was held by customs officials for possible copyright violations, will be available in comic shops in the very near future. US Customs released the books after Customs agreed with the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund that the material in dispute qualified as parody and was not an infringement of the copyrights protecting ***Richie Rich*** or ***Peanuts***, both of which are the subjects of political parodies in the pages of ***Stripburger***. "This is great news," said CBLDF Executive Director *Charles Brownstein* in a release. "It's exactly the kind of victory we want, where reason prevails and no one has to go to court. It's always better to prevent a trial than defend a trial, and I'm pleased that the government felt the same way in this case and returned the materials that were wrongfully seized.. They returned the books and refunded the bond [which was posted by Top Shelf in order to initiate an appeal of the seizure], which can be interpreted as either an admission of error or an acknowledgment that the material wasn't worth making a literal federal case out of. Whatever Customs' reasons, we feel they made the right decision in letting these books go, thereby acknowledging that this work is protected speech."

Out! Dynamite Entertainment's ***Army of Darkness: Shop 'Til You Drop Dead #1***, cover-featured back in ***CSN #920***, sold out of its entire print run from the publisher in a matter of days after its release. "This feels really, really good," writer *Jim Kuhoric* said. "You read about issues selling out, but when you've written one of them yourself, the news really hits home. Its great knowing there are so may fans out there eating up what I'm serving!"

Out! *Marc Silvestri*, who has a variant cover in the works for Marvel's ***Wolverine #26***. Retailers will be able to order one copy of the variant for every fifteen copies of the standard cover they purchase—and that means that the book will most likely carry a premium price from the comic shops that choose to order it. You might want to reserve a copy now, just to play it safe—and tell 'em that ***CSN*** sent you!

Out! ***Wha Huh?***, the missing humor issue of Marvel's December ***What If?*** event, has now been removed from the pages of the ***What If?*** trade paperback as well. Since the comic has yet to see print, that only makes sense—but why hasn't it seen print? According to an online posting by writer *Brian Bendis*, "It has no ship date for legal reasons. No one on editorial or the creative teams is to blame for any of this. and if you think this is how I want it, you are wrong. Hopefully it will be resolved very soon. I am more annoyed than you." The good news is that the absence of this humor issue will bring the price of the trade paperback down to $16.99, a three buck savings.

In! ***X-Men: Phoenix—Endsong #2***, which is following the path blazed by its first issue and going into a second printing. "This is one of those series where the story is so compelling, and the illustrations so stunning, that we couldn't wait for the retailers and fans to see the book," Marvel's director of sales *David Gabriel* said. As was the case with the first issue, the second issue will feature a variant cover featuring Phoenix in her green costume; it should be in comic shops at about the same time as this issue of ***CSN***.

In! The Shuster Awards, named after Toronto-born ***Superman*** co-creator *Joe Shuster*. These awards will recognize the best work by Canadian comic book creators; the first annual awards, focusing on work released in 2004, will be presented at the Paradise Comics Toronto Comicon in late April. The award categories include Outstanding Canadian Comic Book Writer, Artist, Cartoonist, and Publisher, as well as a Canadian Comic Book Retailer Recognition Award and Comic Book Hall of Fame Awards.

Fierman Joins DC

A lot of comic readers are aware of the creators who write and draw their favorite books; many of them even know the names of the editors who guide those comics. But far fewer fans are aware of the talented people who help to promote and market those comics. A monthly line of books don't succeed in a vacuum; their success is nurtured by a strong coordination between the creative side of things and the marketing side. Without marketing, readers wouldn't know what books are coming out; they wouldn't be aware of major storylines, major creative changes, and the like. The people in sales and marketing work on long-term strategies, determining the best time for the release of major projects, analyzing sales trends, and ensuring that the right projects are released at the right time with the right promotion.

In late January, DC brought in *Stephanie Fierman* for a newly-created position of Senior VP—Sales & Marketing. Some wondered if this signaled the beginnings of a change in DC's marketing. Fierman & Bob Wayne, VP-Sales & marketing, talked with ***CSN*** about the new position and what it means for DC.

CSN: What exactly are your duties as Senior VP, Sales & Marketing, Stephanie? What do you and DC envision as the benefits of bringing you on board?

Fierman: The first thing I want to say in addressing that question is that DC Comics has done an incredible job on the direct side. Everyone knows that—we know that, we hope the retailers know that. That's been the basis for this business for a long time. As good a job as we've done to invite new readers into the franchise through the mass markets, the direct market will be the core of this business for a long time to come.

The core of this job, though, is how much more *can* we do? There's an explosion of new kinds of products— graphic novels, manga, etc. We're learning that, to some extent, there are very different kinds of customers for these products, and these customers have different expectations; they shop in different places. We have to ensure that we reach those customers, and we have to bring in more of them. We want to do a better job of putting our marketing efforts for all kinds of customers under one roof, thinking more strategically about our customers and our channels and finding more of both. This will be the first time in a while that all of the sales and marketing functions are managed as part of a single team.

Wayne: At this point, Stephanie hasn't been here for very long—we're talking only a few days thus far, and some of those we had a lot of snow, so she wasn't working with a full staff—so Stephanie's still learning this business and how we do things. There's no rigid set of rules that *Paul [Levitz*, DC's President & Publisher] gave her to come in on Day One and accomplish. Check back with us in six months and we'll see if anything has changed.

The main thing we want to stress, though, is that nothing is changing regarding DC's commitment, my commitment, Paul's commitment to the core market, the direct market. This remains our core market; we are aware of that and we appreciate that.

CSN: For readers who don't know what happens behind the scenes, could you summarize what the sales and marketing department does?

Wayne: Sales and Marketing work to get the comics into people's hands, make the retailers aware of them, make consumers aware of them and where to find them. We're hoping that, by bringing Stephanie here to DC, we can expand on that.

On the direct side, Sales and Marketing are heavily involved in the periodicals. On the mass market side, though, there's less involvement with the periodicals and more of an emphasis on graphic novels and collected editions. On the direct side, we're heavily involved in the timing of events and stories, coordinating with editorial to determine the best time for new series and storylines to be introduced.

CSN: What led to the creation of this new position?

Fierman: There's no individual catalyst for the creation of this job. As we were saying earlier, it's much more about that need to reach those new readers all around the world, and certainly in the US, to get our books into the hands of a wide range of readers interested in lots of different kinds of products. I come with a broader, more varied set of sales and marketing skills, and we think that my skills and background—combined with the expertise we already have here—can help grow DC.

Wayne: There have always been things that we have talked about that we'd have liked to do, but we didn't have the time to do them or the expertise to do them. Rather than try to by trial and error, it made a lot more sense to bring someone in who already had that skill set to accomplish those goals. We always wanted to bring more people into reading comics, not so much focused on the various channels of distribution; we wanted to attract people who were interested in the diverse ways we can deliver the comic book experience, from our superhero line to Vertigo to WildStorm to CMX to Humanoids to 2000AD. These don't always appeal to the same person; we're reaching out to find ways to appeal to those people. I'm a comic book guy from way back, but I don't always know how to reach those people; Stephanie can help us in that way.

DC has always tried to take a leading position in our efforts to bring new readers to comics, and that has led to our doing new things that we've thought would benefit the industry. When you think back to our efforts in putting projects into a book format, as far back as Dark Knight and Watchmen, you might remember that some people said, "Why would anyone want to buy those books for $10-$15-$20 when they can buy a comic for a couple of bucks?" But we were convinced that collected editions offered a new way to reach more readers, and I think that history has proven us right.

CSN: Will the creation of this new position lead to any changes in DC's direct-market strategies? You've led the industry in such things as strong overprintings, returnable overships, rapid-response reprintings, etc.; will that change?

Wayne There's no change in how we're planning to feed demand to our core market. We want to sell as many comics as we can to as many people as possible. The only aspect that might change is that, as we're doing these things, I'll have the benefit of Stephanie's broader expertise.

Fierman: I've been here for about six days, so it's hard to say what will happen long term. We're all here to grow this business based on what we know and what we continue to learn about our customers, and we want to learn and be proactive about that. We know that today, the comic book stores are the place to go for periodicals, not the mass market bookstores. There is some testing going on with us and other publishers regarding periodicals and the mass market outlets, but my arrival won't change what is working and what isn't.

Wayne: Our intent is to amplify the things we do well. DC has led the industry in attracting readers to comics, and we want to continue in that regard. Stephanie's arrival here will certainly help to benefit DC in that regard—and what benefits DC benefits the market overall.

Top Two-Dozen for March

Barbarossa and the Lost Corsairs #1

Brian Augustyn (W)| H.S. Park (A)
(Kandora JAN052849 $3.50)

What's the Scoop?
Take one pirate ship, add one mega-storm of supernatural proportions, mix in one strange world filled with monstrous creatures—now that's a recipe sure to appeal to those who like the taste of ***Pirates of the Caribbean***.!

Why Should You Care?
Kandora's premiere release sounds like the next great historical fantasy that CrossGen never quite got the chance to publish.

Blood of the Demon #1

John Byrne & Will Pfeifer (W)| John Byrne & Bud LaRosa (A)
(DC JAN050291 $2.50; also available in a signed edition (JAN052726 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?
When a villain takes Jason Blood prisoner in order to gain control of Etrigan, he soon learns that the blood bond between man and demon is far more complex than anyone ever realized! Get ready for a much more demonic Etrigan!

Why Should You Care?
Byrne's the man who can take the Demon back to his Kirby-esque roots, stripping the character back to his malevolent basics.

Brian Pulido's War Angel #1

Brian Pulido (W)| Walter Geovani (A)
(Avatar JAN052516 $3.50)

What's the Scoop?
An amoral assassin for hire, on the run and in need of money, tries to play both sides in a supernatural war... but she soon learns that warlocks and vampires aren't as easy to play as she might have hoped!

Why Should You Care?
This ultraviolent post-apocalyptic fantasy introduces another Pulidoesque bad girl—and that's welcome news for Lady Death fans!

DC Countdown #1

Geoff Johns, Greg Rucka, Judd Winick (W)| Rags Morales, Ivan Reis, Phil Jimenez, Jesus Saiz, Jim Lee, & Alex Ross (A)
(DC JAN050296 $1.00)

What's the Scoop?
How do you follow up a blockbuster project like Identity Crisis? With a major story involving virtually every hero in the DC Universe, that's how! This book lays the groundwork for several major DC events slated to debut throughout 2005—and that means it's a must-read!

Why Should You Care?
Three of comics' best writers, a half-dozen of the industry's top artists, a major storyline... what more reason could you possibly need?!

Deadworld #1

Gary Reed (W)| Vince Locke (A)
(Desperado/Image JAN051592 $3.50)

What's the Scoop?
King Zombie's on the road again, and that's very bad news for a group of teens struggling to remain free from the control of the mindless zombie hordes and their malevolently intelligent zombie leaders. Is it possible, though, that these teens hold the key to freeing their world from the zombie menace
forever?

Why Should You Care?
Before ***Toe Tags***, before ***Remains***, before ***Walking Dead***, ***Deadworld*** was the zombie splatterpunk series—and now it's back, complete with its original creative team!

Fathom #0

J.T. Krul (W)| Koi Turnbull, Jason Gorder, & Christina Strain (A)
(Aspen JAN052492 $2.50)

What's the Scoop?
This special zero issue by *Michael Turner's* handpicked team paves the way for this summer's major new ***Fathom*** series.

Why Should You Care?
Michael Turner's famous aquatic creation resurfaces—and that's bound to make quite a splash!

Futurama Simpsons: Crossover Crisis Part 2 #2

Ian Boothby (W)| James Lloyd (A)
(Bongo JAN052555 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
As if the enslavement of every resident of 20th Century Springfield in 31st Century New York City isn't enough of a problem, a reality vortex in the side of the NY Public Library has also unleashed legions of literary characters on the Futurama world. Of course, the odds are that no one but Lisa will have the slightest idea who they are...

Why Should You Care?
Not only is this the only place you can find new ***Futurama*** stories, it's also the the only place you can find a ***Simpsons/Futurama*** crossover. (And judging from the sale of those ***Futurama*** DVD sets, we certainly aren't the only fans of this great series!)

Green Lantern: Rebirth #5

Geoff Johns (W)| Ethan Van Sciver (A)
(DC DEC040261 $2.95; also available in a signed edition (JAN052728, $49.99))

What's the Scoop?
Hal Jordan's restoration to his rightful position as Earth's Green Lantern continues. But what's on store for Kyle Rayner, the current Green Lantern? Find out in this issue!

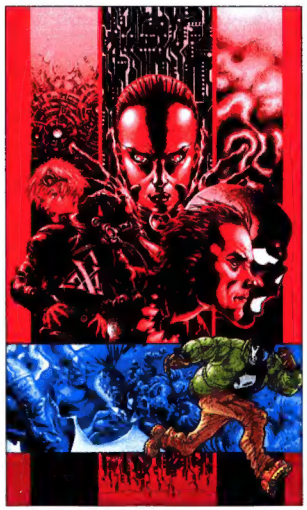
Why Should You Care?
Four printings of the first issue... two printings of the second... Obviously we don't need to tell you why you should care about this series, 'cause you've already figured that out!

Hopeless Savages: B-Sides All Flashback Special

Jen Van Meter (W)| Becky Cloonan, Vera Brosgol, & Mike Norton (A)
(Oni JAN052899 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
The secret origin of Zero's band is revealed in this oneshot look at the beginnings of the Dusted Bunnies.

Why Should You Care?
This quirky generational series focusing on a punk-rock family is a lot like the Osbournes' quasi-reality program, except that there's a story and these characters are actually likeable!



Human Race #1

Ben Raab (W)| Justiniano & Walden Wong (A)
(DC JAN050305 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
An alien invasion spurs a young man to join a super-powered fraternity charged with protecting the genetic code of the human race from any outside interference—a fraternity that should have no problem welcoming this young man to their ranks, since he's manifesting some super-powers of his own!

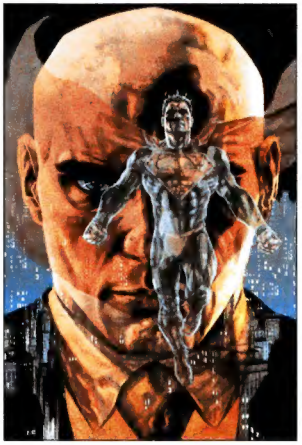
Why Should You Care?
Science fiction meets superheroics in this unpredictable limited series.

Imaginaries #1

Ben Avery (W)| Mike S. Miller & Gregory Titus (A)
(Image JAN051602 $2.95)

What's the Scoop?
Where do all those imaginary friends of children 'round the world go when they've become forgotten facets of childhood gone by? They end up in the Imagined Nation, the realm populated by all those forgotten friends... but it's what happens *after* Superhero G arrives in this wondrous land that's the focus of this delightful all-ages tale.

Why Should You Care?
Abadazad proved that there's an eager market for well-crafted fantasy targeted freed from often-forced "mature readers" trappings—and it's no surprise that creators like Avery & Miller are tapping into that vast audience!



LEX LUTHOR: MAN OF STEEL #1

Brian Azzarello (W)| Lee Bermejo (A)
(DC JAN050288 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
Comic readers may perceive of him as a villain, but that's not the way Lex Luthor sees himself. In his eyes, he's a man who's doing the right thing—namely, saving humanity from a powerful alien who can't be trusted.

Why Should You Care?
Brian Azzarello, a master of characterization, brings a new twist to the psyche of one of DC's most famous villains.

NEGATIVE BURN WINTER 2005 #1

Joe Pruett, Brian Bolland, Bob Burden, Zander Cannon, Evan Dorkin, Phil Hester, Erik Larsen, Vince Locke, Jimmy Palmiotti, Mike Raicht, Gary Reed, Carlos Rodriguez, Kelsey Shannon, Eric Stephenson, & Chas Truog (W/A)
(Desperado/Image JAN051608 $9.95)

What's the Scoop?
Joe Pruett resurrects one of the most acclaimed anthology series of the 1990s—and he's enlisted some of the 21st Century's top writers and artists to join him in the relaunch!

Why Should You Care?
Check out that talent list and you can answer that question for yourself! This is one indy anthology that's all meat, no filler!

OTHERWORLD #1

Phil Jimenez (W)| Phil Jimenez & Andy Lanning (A)
(Vertigo/DC JAN050377 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
The Otherworld is two realities in one—an idyllic world of mythological beings and a realm of super-technology—but those two realities are a virtual state of war with one another. Into this conflict come a group of young people from Earth... people who have been given amazing powers. One of them has the power to save the Otherworld... or to destroy it. Which will it be?

Why Should You Care?
Phil Jimenez makes his Vertigo debut with this far-reaching series that blends ***Lost***, ***The Matrix***, and ***Lord of The Rings*** into one grand saga.

PACT #1

Jim Valentino (W/A)
(Image JAN051610 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
The Imageverse gets Teen-Titaned! Four super-powered teens (Firebreather, Invincible, ShadowHawk, and Zephyr) from dysfunctional families form their own super-group in this four-issue limited series that begins when the quartet must confront Belloc, the gigantic fire-breathing-dragon father of Firebreather.

Why Should You Care?
Readers who have longed for an interrelated Image superheroverse get their wish with this limited series that features four self-contained stories, each one written by one of the main characters' creators.

RAYMOND E FEIST'S THE WOOD BOY #1

Raymond Feist & Sean Jordan (W)| Mat Broome (A)
(Image/DBPro, JAN051638 $2.95)

What's the Scoop?
A young boy discovers the hero within as he pursues those who killed the man who enslaved him and absconded with the dead man's fortune... and his beautiful teenage daughter.

Why Should You Care?
The company that made its mark with their first major fantasy adaptation, ***The Hedge Knight***, is back with an encore series based on a tale in *Raymond Feist's* best-selling Riftwar Saga.

SEVEN SOLDIERS: GUARDIAN #1

Grant Morrison (W)| Cameron Stewart (A)
(DC JAN050317 $2.99)

SEVEN SOLDIERS: SHINING KNIGHT #1

Grant Morrison (W)| Simone Bianchi (A)
(DC JAN050318 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
Grant Morrison's thirty-part megaseries continues with the debut of two more superheroic reboots. First up is the new Guardian, the hero who is the living icon of the Manhattan Guardian newspaper, exemplifying its slogan, "We don't just report crime—we fight crime!" Next is an Arthurian fantasy thrust into the 21st century as a sixteen-year-old who is the last hope of Camelot finds himself fighting to save the future of all mankind... a fight that starts on present-day Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles!

Why Should You Care?
Grant Morrison continues to renovate some of the DCU's second-tier heroes with intriguing, sometimes radical reinterpretations. Most creators spend a lifetime developing the dozens of concepts that Morrison is packing into the most ambitious superhero project of his career.

STAR WARS: GENERAL GRIEVOUS #1

Chuck Dixon (W)| Rick Leonardi & Mark Pennington (A)
(Dark Horse JAN050046 $2.99)

What's the Scoop?
Padawan Flynn Kybo goes against the wishes of the Jedi Council to track down General Grievous,the killer responsible for the death of Kybo's master, T'chooka D'oon.

Why Should You Care?
In case you haven't heard, there's a ***Star Wars*** film coming up this year, and this Grievous guy has a pretty significant role in it...

SUPERMAN #215

Brian Azzarello (W)| Jim Lee & Scott Williams (A)
(DC JAN050280 $2.50; also available in a signed edition (JAN052730 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?
In the final installment of the year-long "For Tomorrow" story arc, Superman must face the deadly foe responsible for all the turmoil and horror—but can even Superman deal with evil of this magnitude?

Why Should You Care?
All the answers to the past year's mysteries can be found in this issue!

SUPERMAN BATMAN #19

Jeph Loeb (W)| Ian Churchill & Norm Rapmund (A)
(DC JAN050284 $2.99; also available in a remarked edition (JAN052732 $69.99) and a signed edition (JAN052731 $49.99))

What's the Scoop?
What's Supergirl been up to since ***Superman/Batman #13?*** Find out in this special standalone issue!

Why Should You Care?
The story arc that introduced Supergirl was one of the biggest events of 2004, and this comic bridges the gap between that best-selling arc and the upcoming ***Supergirl*** series slated to debut later this year.

ULTIMATE IRON MAN #1

Orson Scott Card (W)| Andy Kubert (W)
(Marvel JAN051798 $2.99; also available in a signed edition (JAN52717 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?
Think you know everything about the origins of the Ultimate Iron Man? Turns out there's a lot more to the story than you've been told... until now!

Why Should You Care?
Hugo and Nebula-Award-winner *Orson Scott Card* makes his comic book debut as the writer of this ***Ultimates*** spinoff series, and he's joined by *Andy Kubert*, who's chosen this as his first project since the wrap-up of the mega-hit ***Marvel: 1602***.

ULTIMATE SECRET #1

Warren Ellis (W)¦ Steve McNiven (A)
(Marvel JAN051810 $2.99; also available in signed editions (JAN052718 $29.99 and JAN052719 $19.99))

What's the Scoop?
It seems that the US government's new propulsion system may put them on the doorstep of interstellar travel—and that's not sitting too well with some intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic... But what does all of this mean for the Ultimates and the Ultimate Fantastic Four?

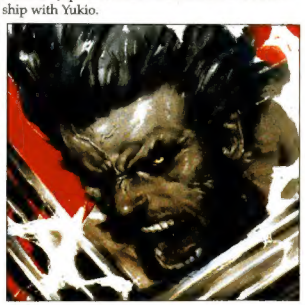
Why Should You Care?
Warren Ellis' three-miniseries saga continues with this five-parter that introduces the Ultimate Captain Marvel, adding a cosmic angle to the Ultiverse.

WOLVERINE: SOULTAKER #1

Akira Yoshida (W)¦ Shin Nagasawa (A)
(Marvel JAN051853 $2.99; also available in a signed edition (JAN052721 $69.99))

What's the Scoop?
Do you like Wolverine? Do you like ninjas? Do you like gladiator movies? Well, you'll find the first two in this limited series that takes Logan back to Japan, where he gets caught in the middle of an ancient war between gods and demons.

Why Should You Care?
This story delivers more details about the feral mutant's Japanese links—and about his relationship with Yukio.



X-MEN AGE OF APOCALYPSE #1

(Marvel JAN051802 $2.99)

X-MEN AGE OF APOCALYPSE #2

(Marvel JAN051803 $2.99)

X-MEN AGE OF APOCALYPSE #3

(Marvel JAN051804 $2.99)

X-MEN AGE OF APOCALYPSE #4

(Marvel JAN051805 $2.99)

X-MEN AGE OF APOCALYPSE #5

(Marvel JAN051806 $2.99)

Akira Yoshida (W)¦ Chris Bachalo (A)

What's the Scoop?
Apocalypse was destroyed, right? The end of the world is just a bad dream, right? Maybe not! Sinister has a backup plan, and he's unleashed a force powerful enough to reignite the Age of Apocalypse. The world's only hope is a retired Weapon X... if Magneto and the X-Men can track him down!

Why Should You Care?
One of the most popular X-Men stories in the past quarter-century is revisited in this weekly miniseries illustrated by the incomparable *Chris Bachalo*

CHECK 'EM OUT:
BOOKS YOU SHOULD BE READING

FALLEN ANGEL #19

(DC JAN050299 $2.99)
Peter David's pulls out all the stops in an effort to attract new readers to the moody and enigmatic ***Fallen Angel***—and that means guest-stars! David brings back Sachs and Violens, the characters he and *George Pérez* created for Marvel's Epic line in the 90's, as the duo pays a visit to Bête Noir.

FLIGHT VOL 2 GN

(Image JAN051598 $24.95)
Editor *Kazu Kabuishi* presents a followup volume to last summer's acclaimed original anthology. Once again, he's attracted an impressive array of creators, including Jeff Smith, Michel Gagne, and Doug Tennapel, who present an array of imaginative tales targeted for readers of all ages and interests.

GOLDEN PLATES #2

(AAAPop JAN052367 $7.99)
Michael & Laura Allred continue their faithful adaptation of the Book of Mormon. The powerful mythic elements of any religious story make for powerful comic books, and the Book of Mormon is no exception. Allred is approaching his subject matter with respect and intellectual appreciation, and it shows in every page.

OWLY VOL 2: JUST A LITTLE BLUE TP

(Top Shelf DEC042913 $10.00)
Andy Runton is back with his second all-ages volume featuring the charming anthropomorphic Owly. This time around, he learns that you sometimes have to make sacrifices for the things that are really important to you... especially friendship.

STOKER'S DRACULA #4

(Marvel JAN051830 $3.99)
It's been almost thirty years since *Roy Thomas & Dick Giordano* began their landmark adaptation of Bram Stoker's Victorian-gothic classic—and now, at long last, they're giving fans a chance to see the final segments of that previously-unfinished comic book retelling.

READ ALL ABOUT IT:
MUST-HAVE ADDITIONS TO YOUR REFERENCE LIBRARY

ART OF GEORGE TUSKA

(TwoMorrows DEC042921 $14.95)
The work of this underrated Golden & Silver Age talent is the focus of this new book from the company responsible for such must-read works as ***The Jack Kirby Collector*** and ***Alter Ego***.

BIG BIG OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE VOL 35

(GemStone JAN052787 $37.00)
Now here's a price guide designed for ease of use—oversized pages, spiral binding, plenty of room in the margins for notes. If you've ever tried to hold a price guide open with one hand while pricing a book with the other, you know how helpful this is!

EISNER•MILLER TP

(Dark Horse JAN040035 $19.99)
Will Eisner may be gone, but the gift he's left us continue. This volume offers readers a chance to sit in on a conversation between two of comics' most talented visual storytellers—the aforementioned Mr. Eisner and the incomparable *Frank Miller*—as they discuss the art form's past and its potential.

HOT COMMODITIES:
MARCH'S HOTTEST MERCHANDISING•COLLECTIBLES

BATMAN MINI STATUE

(DC Direct SEP040400 $39.95)
If you missed out on the sold-out ***Jim Lee Batman*** full-sized statue, here's your small-sized second chance!

CATWOMAN PINUP STATUE

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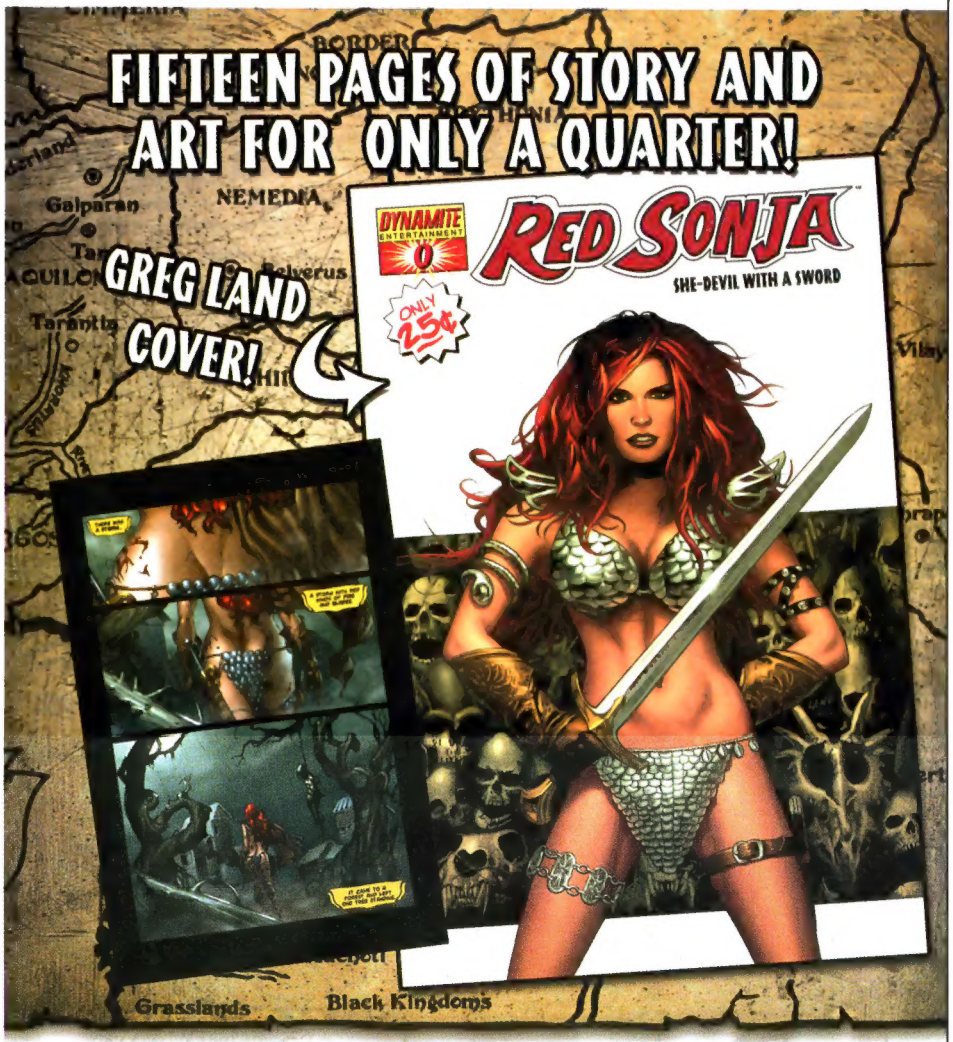

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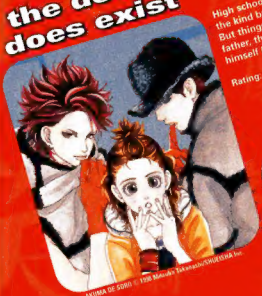

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High school is hard for Kayano. When she tries to confess her love to the kind but distant Yuichi, the school bully Takeru makes her life hell. But things get worse when Kayano's mother gets engaged to Takeru's father, the school principal! How will she cope with having the devil himself living in her own home?

Rating: Teen

monster collection

the girl who can deal with magic monsters

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Kasche may have a talent for controlling beasts, but she's got a lot to learn about self-control before she can become a full-fledged Summoner. When disaster strikes, her principal chooses her to avert it. Joined by allies both human and not, Kasche must recapture the relic from an evil Summoner before to unlock the Encyclopedia Verum and call up the most powerful monsters ever seen!

Rating: Mature

sword of the dark ones

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In the Asgard Empire, people live their lives in constant fear. Monsters known as the Dark Ones roam the land, killing indiscriminately. One man has built a reputation as the best monster-killer around—a former mercenary known as Leroy, "the Black Lightning." Hired to rescue the sister of the woman he vowed to kill, Leroy descends into the sordid world of assassins and prostitutes. But what he'll discover challenges everything he thought he knew about the Dark Ones... and himself.

Rating: Mature

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